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C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 001838

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NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE
NSC FOR ABRAMS/DORAN/MUSTAFA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/01/2016

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SUBJECT: AL QUDS UNIVERSITY RENEWS CALL FOR U.S. SUPPORT

REF: JERUSALEM 01378

Classified By: Ambassador Richard H. Jones, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

This message has been cleared by Consulate General Jerusalem.

¶1. (C) In a meeting with Presidential Science Advisor John Marburger at Hebrew University April 23, Ziad Abdeen, Senior Researcher at Al Quds University, reiterated reftel request for U.S. support for Al Quds regional fundraising efforts. Abdeen was attending the meeting at Hebrew U. representing Al Quds President Sari Nusseibeh who was out of the country. Abdeen said that Nusseibeh and professors like Abdeen who support him consider Israel "a neighbor and not the enemy." He noted that most Al Quds staff had studied at Israeli universities. Under Nusseibeh's leadership, Al Quds was "not isolated, but networking in the region, with the Arab World and internationally." Abdeen proudly stated that there had been a dramatic increase in publications by Al Quds researchers, and that Al Quds had the largest share of grant partnerships with Israeli institutions under the Middle East Regional Cooperation (MERC) Program. He said that Al Quds was maintaining its academic independence, but Nusseibeh's leadership was being challenged by staff sympathetic to Hamas.

¶2. (C) Noting that Al Quds' cooperation with Israeli institutions was "overt", Abdeen asked that the U.S. support the university's fundraising efforts with Gulf countries. He said Nusseibeh was prepared to visit officials of Gulf states together with American ambassadors in the region, if the U.S. would be willing to lend that kind of support to avoid Al Quds being taken over by Hamas. Abdeen said that Secretary Powell had provided a letter to the leadership in Qatar to support earlier fundraising efforts. Due to U.S. restrictions on assistance to the Palestinian Authority, Abdeen stressed that the success of Nusseibeh's fundraising activities required such demonstrations of U.S. support for the university's independence.

¶3. (U) Dr. Marburger's office cleared this message.

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JONES